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Document Citation

Title	**Hollywood Anger**
Author(s)	Mick Brown
Source	*Crawdaddy*
Date	1976 Sep
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	50-57
No. of Pages	8
Subjects	Anger, Kenneth (1927), Santa Monica, California, United States
Film Subjects	

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HOLLYWOOD *Anger*

by Mick Brown

The gossip-monger who exposed Babylon, created "Scorpio Rising" and inspired "Sympathy for the Devil," turns to Magick and the ascending Lucifer.

Kenneth Anger was barely seven months old when Paul Bern committed suicide. Bern was assistant to Irving Thalberg, production chief of MGM—the studio which boasted more stars than the Hollywood sky. Jean Harlow, the platinum blonde sex-goddess, was one of those stars. Bern had been married to Harlow for just two months when he snuffed himself; apparently the marriage had been somewhat flawed by a personal "problem" of Bern's which had led him to introduce an artificial penis into the marital bed. Poor Paul. He was found by the butler sprawled nude in the all-white bedroom, drenched in his wife's favorite perfume, his brains blown out by a .38 pistol.

Kenneth Anger was three years old when Lou Tellegen followed suit. Tellegen had been a leading man in movies of the late 1920s but by 1935 he was just another forgotten star. Unlucky Lou. He committed suicide by *hara-kiri*, disemboweling himself with the personally-monogrammed gold scissors he had once used to cut out his press notices.

The Hollywood of the 1930s—the Hollywood in which Kenneth Anger grew up—was a place where people died as exotically as they had lived. Throughout the decade, newspapers, scandal sheets and the Hollywood gossip mill churned out stories on the Stars, dwelling with morbid curiosity on their deaths, reeling in self-righteous disapprobation at the most intimate details of their lives—like the existence of Marlene Dietrich's "Sewing Circle," a clique of bi-sexual swingers, and Marlene's rumored *affaire de coeur* with Claudette Colbert; and of Mary Astor's extra-marital affair with playwright George Kaufman, which kept the busybodies of America abuzz for weeks, filling in the asterisks in the printed excerpts from Mary's *highly* personal diary.

Kenneth Anger's connections with the doings of the Hollywood movie aristocracy were closer than most. His father worked as an aeronautics engineer for the Douglas Aircraft Corporation—not much scandal *there*—but Anger's grandmother had been a wardrobe mistress in the days of the silents, working on spectacles like *The Queen of Sheba*, and numbered many friends in the movie colony. It was she who introduced the four-year-old Anger to the expatriate film director Max Rheinhardt, who cast Anger as the Changeling Prince in his 1936 version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And what a dream! Scampering in spangles and plumes through Rheinhardt's magical forest—thrown up on the backlot of Warners' studios drenched in shellac and silver paint, which smelled heaven-high under the powerful glare of the arc lights.

It was Anger's first and last flirtation with the Hollywood spectacle but the bug had taken hold. He grew up collecting photographs and clippings and anecdotes of the stars, culled from friends like Mae Murray, another of the MGM pantheon and a fountain of reminiscence and gossip.

Anger was still at school—Beverly Hills High, a veritable Tower of Babble in those days—when Lupe Velez, movieland's Mexican Spitfire, killed herself. Lupe had planned a Snow White suicide, to be found lying on her bed in her finest satin robe, surrounded by bouquets of flowers, OD'ed on sleepers. But at the last moment the tablets reacted with some enchiladas Lupe had eaten that evening. Rather than defile her fantasy-death tableau, she tottered into the lavatory to vomit and drowned with her head in the toilet bowl.

Anger was living just a couple of blocks from Lupe's house at the time. When she died he went over to dig up the details from her maid and her cook.

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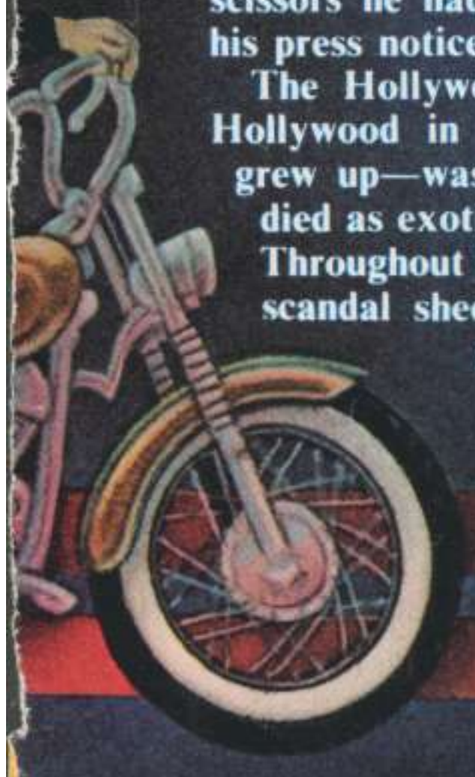
It was in the late 1950s that Anger finally started putting it all down on paper. By that time he had acquired a reputation of his own as one of America's foremost underground filmmakers. He had made his first movie, *Who's Rocking My Dreamboat*, at 11, using film left over from his family's



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holiday movies. His father wanted him to follow his brother into aeronautics; instead, through his grandmother's intervention, Anger grew up under the influence of artists, musicians, film people—on the borders of Hollywood bohemia.

His first exhibited film, *Fireworks*, made in 1947, was a mark of how distanced he had become from the conventions of his family background; it was a startlingly precocious homosexual/masochistic piece made in three days with his grandmother's help while his parents were attending an uncle's funeral. Jean Cocteau saw the film, invited young Anger to France and introduced him to Parisian artistic circles. His visit led to an aborted attempt to make a film of a Cocteau ballet; instead he went with works like *Puce Moment*, *Eaux d'Artifice* and an unfinished adaptation of the celebrated erotic novel *L'histoire d'O*.

But the underground filmmaker's art is a financially precarious one and reputations don't pay the rent. At the invitation of a publisher—and subscribing to Oscar Wilde's adage that there's nothing else to do with gossip but spread it around—Anger dove into his scrapbook of Hollywood's golden years, using it as the jumping-off point for an investigation into Tinseltown's most infamous scandals. The result, *Hollywood Babylon*, was published in Paris (in French) in 1960 and the proceeds from the book enabled Anger to live comfortably in France for the next few years.

His book became something of a *cause célèbre*. In 1965 *Hollywood Babylon* was pirated and a crude and inaccurate translation published in America. That same year a film based on the book—again made without Anger's permission—appeared, a third-rate porno piece using people ("You couldn't call them *actors*," says Anger pithily) to portray the Hollywood greats. A federal court injunction finally got both the film and the unauthorized version of the book withdrawn. Anger still hasn't seen a penny from either.

Finally, some fifteen years after the birth of the original idea, with funds from his filmmaking activities again running low, Anger delivered a revised edition of *Hollywood Babylon* for American publication. The subterranean classic finally broke surface, soaring right to the top of the trade paperback charts.

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Kenneth Anger is living in a small hotel, a stone's throw from London's West End. I arrive early for my appointment and am ushered into the lounge. Anger bustles in a few moments later in a state of mild agitation. His appearance comes almost as a shock. Through descriptions, early photographs—the ripples of an almost sinister mystique which seems to have grown up around Anger over the years—I had expected to be confronted with a distant, brooding, even threatening, man dressed in leather, or at least denims.

He is, in fact, dark and stocky with a Romanesque nose set above full lips, hair curly but neat—a youthful-looking 44, fastidiously dressed in a brown corduroy suit and complementing orange shirt. The air is one of bustle and does one detect a slight apprehension? An art gallery owner about to spring a new protégé on a roomful of hostile critics? He explains: he has two tickets for a movie showing that afternoon—a rather amusing British musical of the 1930's, *Chu Chin Chow*, starring Anna May Wong. It's a rare showing, could be his last chance . . . can the interview wait?

We almost run to the subway. On the train he thumbs through a copy of a magazine, pausing over an article about Robert Plant. He reads it from beginning to end, indifferent to my presence. Then in a surprised tone, "Oh, but you haven't given the *real* story behind Robert leaving Los Angeles. . . ." The interview waits.

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Hollywood Babylon is a perverse prayer to the heyday of Hollywood, a terribly thorough and thoroughly terrible record of the seamy underbelly of Tinseltown's dreamlike facade, with skeletons wrenched out of closets, peccadilloes mercilessly unearthed and corpses scattered liberally throughout. Anger describes it as "an exercise in black humor" and "an allegory of the success myth of America. For all those people who seem to have a firm foothold on the ladder upwards, there's a lot of human wreckage lying at the bottom."

Anger begins his book with D.W. Griffith's set of Ancient Babylon for his film *Intolerance*, a garish, gargantuan folly, artifact of the day when a movie mogul's every whim could be transformed into reality—but *unreal*. Griffith had huge white elephants towering on sculpted pillars at Babylon's gates. An endearing absurdity: there were no elephants in Babylon—white or otherwise.

Unreal. Griffith's dreamland became the motif for the burgeoning film colony as hopefuls flocked to Hollywood, lured by the promise of wealth and fame. "What happened to Hollywood then wasn't too different from what happens in the rock world now," says Anger. "It was sudden wealth, fame, notoriety—all those things in overwhelming doses. Some people can handle it; others can't. They were easy prey for all sorts of people to take advantage of them and also for their own most wayward impulses."

And so the Stars gamboled, fucked, coked up (they called it "Joy Powder" in the early days) and snuffed out with religious dedication, while America looked on. And as filmmaking became Hollywood's first industry, so commercialized gossip about its stars became the second. "In truth you could probably have found almost as much scandal in any average-sized town—though maybe not such an exotic nature—as there was to be found in Hollywood," says Anger. "But it was the personalities involved that made it interesting. It was happening to people

MAJE WALDO

THE TOWER OF BABBLE: GOSSIP KNOWN ONLY TO A STAR'S BOOTLEGGER, DOPE DEALER, BEST FRIEND, WORST ENEMY, OR MORTICIAN

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who were household names, and if they stepped out of line they were just helping the show along."

When the Stars didn't step out of line the scandal rags simply *pretended* they did. Papers like William Hearst's *Examiner*, the *GraphiC* and *Confidential* thrived on a salacious diet of innuendo, half-truth and downright lie. Columnists like Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons (whom Anger describes as "The Paganini of Piffle") raked up the muck and spread it to the masses, wielding an unholy power to irreparably wreck a Star's career.

And when the Stars weren't being spied on by the scandal-mongers they were being pried on by each other. Gossip was the lifeblood of Dream City—the sort of gossip which would have *really* satiated the appetites of the yellow-press readers but which the papers would never have dared to print; the sort of gossip known only to a Star's bootlegger, dope dealer, best friend, worst enemy or mortician. . . .

As you talk to Kenneth Anger you come to realize that he has about him the sort of refined charm and quiet authority that would insure the divulgence of such confidence. He talks in a quiet voice, at times barely audible, and his gestures—folding his hands in front of him, wiping his brow with a pristine handkerchief—are those of the aesthete. He has, too, a highly-developed sense of the sardonic, the caustic, which flashes occasionally into conversation like a well-oiled switchblade from under the conservative brown suit. He employs it sparingly, as one employs the most effective of weapons. One senses that Anger would have been in his element bantering at the highest tables at the Trocadero, the Famous Door or the Brown Derby. For Kenneth Anger to tap the fountain of Hollywood's most secret gossip would, one imagines, be easier than for most.

Anger spent more than two years researching *Hollywood Babylon*. He pored over newspaper clippings and through police files, court reports and mortuary records. And he talked—to butlers, maids, make-up artists, designers, publicity men, stand-ins, stars, has-beens, would-have-beens and never-beens: the grapevine. Hollywood did not close ranks to protect the guilty. Old rivalries and jealousies were dragged out of dark corners. Gossip had always been the principle currency of Tinseltown; Anger simply got the old coin back in circulation.

His investigations were exhaustive: Fatty Arbuckle's widow, the actress Minta Durfee, was one of the sources for the dirt on the Prince of Whales' riotous orgy which led to Fatty standing trial for the rape and murder of starlet Virginia Rappe. Fatty's bootlegger obligingly listed the illicit booze downed at the occasion.

Photographs were harder to come by. Anger already had the nude snap of 17-year-old Jean Harlow and the photo of Jayne Mansfield's cataclysmic car-smash in his possession "but there were a few more I wanted and couldn't get," he says.

"One was an unpublished photo of the body of James Dean in the mortuary; it had been 'removed' from the police files. It shows that he wasn't mutilated, which

MAJE WALDO

Anger caught Brando with his pants down

there was talk of at the time. His chest was crushed but his face looked like he was asleep—very peaceful. The owner wanted $2,000 for the photo. That was a little *too* much. . . ."

The material Anger decided to omit from the book for fear of legal or personal reprisals (though not, heaven forbid, for reasons of taste) is almost as plentiful and in some cases a good deal more scurrilous than that actually included. It was Anger's publisher who advised him to drop the photograph of Marlon Brando taken at a stag party in the 1950s which allegedly shows Brando in what *Confidential* might have described as a "sexually compromising" position—with another man.

"It's a pity," says Anger, "because it's a terrific photo. I guess it was a dare or something but the idea that it's right out there in front of the party . . . it sort of sums up *Hollywood Babylon* in a way, even though Brando is really anti-star. In the days when he arrived in Hollywood, Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons still meant something, but Marlon publicly insulted them when even people like Cary Grant and Gary Cooper were practically kissing their asses."

Joan Crawford was another celebrity spared the full scandalizing treatment after she made it known through intermediaries that she would take a highly litigatious view of Anger publishing anything which suggested that she had been involved in certain "film work" in Chicago before she ever went to Hollywood. Anger came across the evidence during a spell working for Dr. Alfred Kinsey, arranging interviews for Kinsey's study, *The Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*. Kinsey's research library includes pornographic movies confiscated during police raids.

"Joan has consistently denied that she ever did this," says Anger. "There have been attempts to blackmail her throughout her career with copies of the films. She thinks she's destroyed them all, but another one always turns up. In later years, of course, her looks changed so much that she could very well deny it; the girl in the movies didn't look anything like her. Nowadays the films would be considered quite anodyne—almost like strip-tease things, but I decided to drop any reference. . . ."

Blue movies were, of course, a common sub-industry in the world's movie capital and were in frequent circulation at the choicest mansion and poolside parties. The constant influx of would-be stars and starlets looking for their big break ensured that casting was never a problem. One of the more interesting aspects of Hollywood's taste for porn was the "doctoring" of main features. "Two famous examples were done at the MGM studios, unofficially of course, in the 1930s," Anger explains. "One was a porn version of *Red Dust*, another a porn version of Garbo's *Camille*. They were done using stand-ins in the actor's costumes, photographed in such a way that you never saw them full face.

"So you have a scene in *Red Dust* with Harlow and Gable, which in the official version fades out at the crucial point, whereas in the so-called 'hot' version it goes on for another five or ten minutes, going into close-ups and so on. They would usually be shot on the set at night by a little conspiracy within the studio, headed by someone like the unit's second cameraman. It was extremely well done; in fact, somebody should try bringing them out now. . . ." The doctored prints were circulated around the South American vacation circuit—Buenos Aires, Rio and Havana—but the clandestine industry was finally stopped when word of how spare film stock was being used reached MGM boss Louis B. Mayer.

While the bulk of *Hollywood Babylon* deals with Hollywood's nascent and golden days—the '20s, '30s and '40s (the period which interests Anger most)—much of it is of more than mere historical interest. As Anger himself says: while some things may appear to be dead, they only need the dust scratched off to reveal themselves as being very much alive.

Two unsolved Hollywood murders are a case in point; one Anger deals with in *Hollywood Babylon*, the other—the murder of a director of 1930s gothic horror movies—he omitted. Anger claims to know the truth behind both murders, and

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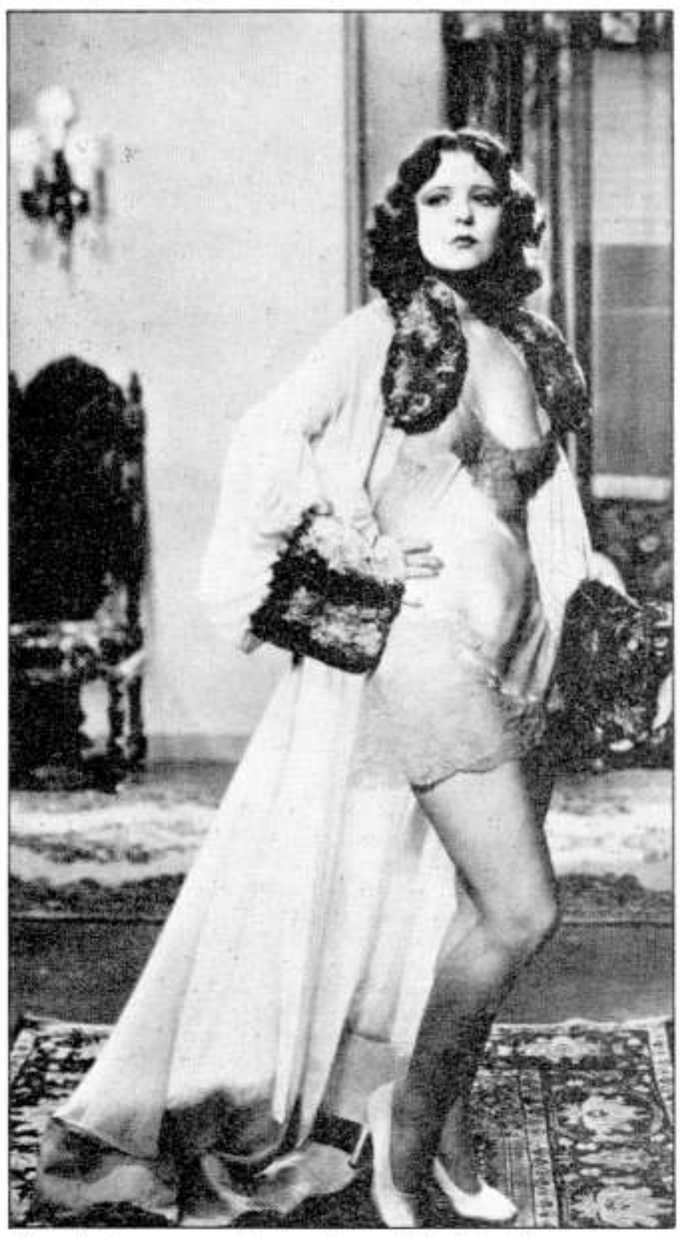
the identity of the murderers, both of whom are still alive and living in California. It was the possible threat of legal or—more likely—some other kind of action which caused Anger to refrain from naming them. A comprehensive appraisal of Frank Sinatra's activities and habits was dropped for the same reasons.

Anger says he had no qualms about



divulging anything that did finally appear in print. "I wouldn't like to feel that I was causing someone undue anguish or giving them something they didn't deserve," he says, "but I don't think there's anything like that in the book. I think it's quite all right to say in print something that, let's face it, has been known in Hollywood for years and years; that an early star like Janet Gaynor, for example, was in fact quite an aggressive little dyke. She's now a sweet old lady, and I haven't had any complaints from her about it. It would be quite nice if she could go on a television chat show and talk about it. It's not going to do her any harm; I think it makes her a more interesting person."

But most of the cast of *Hollywood Babylon* are already in the grave—spinning now, perhaps, but in the grave nonetheless. (Not all: John Wayne, for example, still refuses to say die. Anger feels Duke would be quite proud of Anger's revelation that Wayne was eleventh man in a gang-bang line for Clara Bow.) The present generation of Hollywood stars interests Anger not one little bit. Even the fact that there's probably more coke vanishing up the nostrils of . . . aah, but that would be telling . . . in a week than was sniffed in the entire movie colony in any month in the '20s leaves Anger cold.

"It seems like it was more *daring* then," he says. "I guess people like Liz Taylor and Barbra Streisand are stars but they just don't measure up on my particular scale. There isn't the giddy quality now like there was in the '20s and '30s. People then had outsize personalities; they even destroyed themselves in a rather *touching* manner. You could see they were riding for a fall; that it couldn't last. . . ."

It didn't. Killed off by television, economic factors, changing tastes and mores—by itself. A big, bad, beautiful dinosaur—extinct, gone, vanished, *kaput*. Not just Dream City but the whole double-edged morality of America which

CLARA BOW BANGING JOHN WAYNE AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME--AND OTHER MYTHIC HALLUCINATIONS

gave Hollywood its racy mystique; the sort of morality which enabled the solid burghers and housewives of middle-America to indulge their worst instincts for dirt while damning the unholy carnality of the Stars who gave it to them. Standards change. America was scandalized when Pickford and Fairbanks divorced. Ingrid Bergman had to leave the country with her illegitimate child rather than face the self-righteous scorn of the public who had first made her a star. Who cares now about the tedious marital comings and goings of Burton and Taylor?

And Hollywood? Mondo sleazo. *Tackee*, says Anger—like Miami Beach.

"Glamor's certainly hard to come by there nowadays," he said wearily. "Only a real cornball would find it interesting now. It's not even a nice place to visit—and I certainly wouldn't want to live there. . . ."

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THE MAGICKAL CONNECTION

It seems more than mere coincidence that for one fleeting moment in 1916 Anger's two abiding, and apparently disparate, interests should have crossed paths. That was the year that Hollywood played host to the notorious English magician, Aleister Crowley. In those days the movie colony was still young but already the buds of the new Babylon could be seen bursting into flower. Crowley took note of the Hollywood doyens as "the cinema crowd of cocaine-crazed sexual lunatics."

Of both cocaine and sex Crowley knew more than a little himself. Throughout his life he experimented with drugs like coke, hashish and mescaline for reasons of what might glibly be called consciousness-raising more than hedonism (ironically, for the last years of his life he was addicted to the most mind-numbing drug of all, heroin) and he frequently practiced sexual magic as a "tap" to the powers of the subconscious.

During his lifetime Crowley was villified as "the wickedest man in the world." Anger prefers to see him as the world's most misunderstood genius. By any standards his life was a remarkable one, not least for his "ghost" authorship of *The Book of the Law*, a text which Crowley transcribed at the instruction of his Guardian angel (Aiwass) in Cairo in 1904. To Crowley the book was unquestioned proof of the existence of an intelligence higher than man's with whom he can communicate and it was from *The Book of the Law* that Crowley drew the maxim which became the yardstick for his own existence—"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. . . ."

Kenneth Anger was first introduced to the teachings of Crowley while still at high school in Beverly Hills by one Jack Parsons. A physicist intrumental in the invention of the fuel which powered the Apollo space shots, Parsons was Crowley's "magical son," the man appointed by the mage to carry on his work after his death.

Anger tells two interesting stories about Parsons. The first concerns L. Ron Hubbard, the Founder of Scientology. Hubbard has described how as an operative for U.S. Naval Intelligence he was sent to investigate Parsons and disperse the magical group he was then working with. But according to Anger, Hubbard and Parsons in fact worked together as student magicians. Anger claims that Hubbard betrayed Parsons, stole his bank account, his yacht and his wife, "acting like a real demon." Par-

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sons then "conjured" up a storm which wrecked the stolen boat off the Florida coast and Hubbard limped back to "fabricate" his story.

Anger strongly disapproves of Scientology. "It's the complete opposite of Crowley's system. He was for freeing the individual; Scientology enslaves them. It's mental fascism."

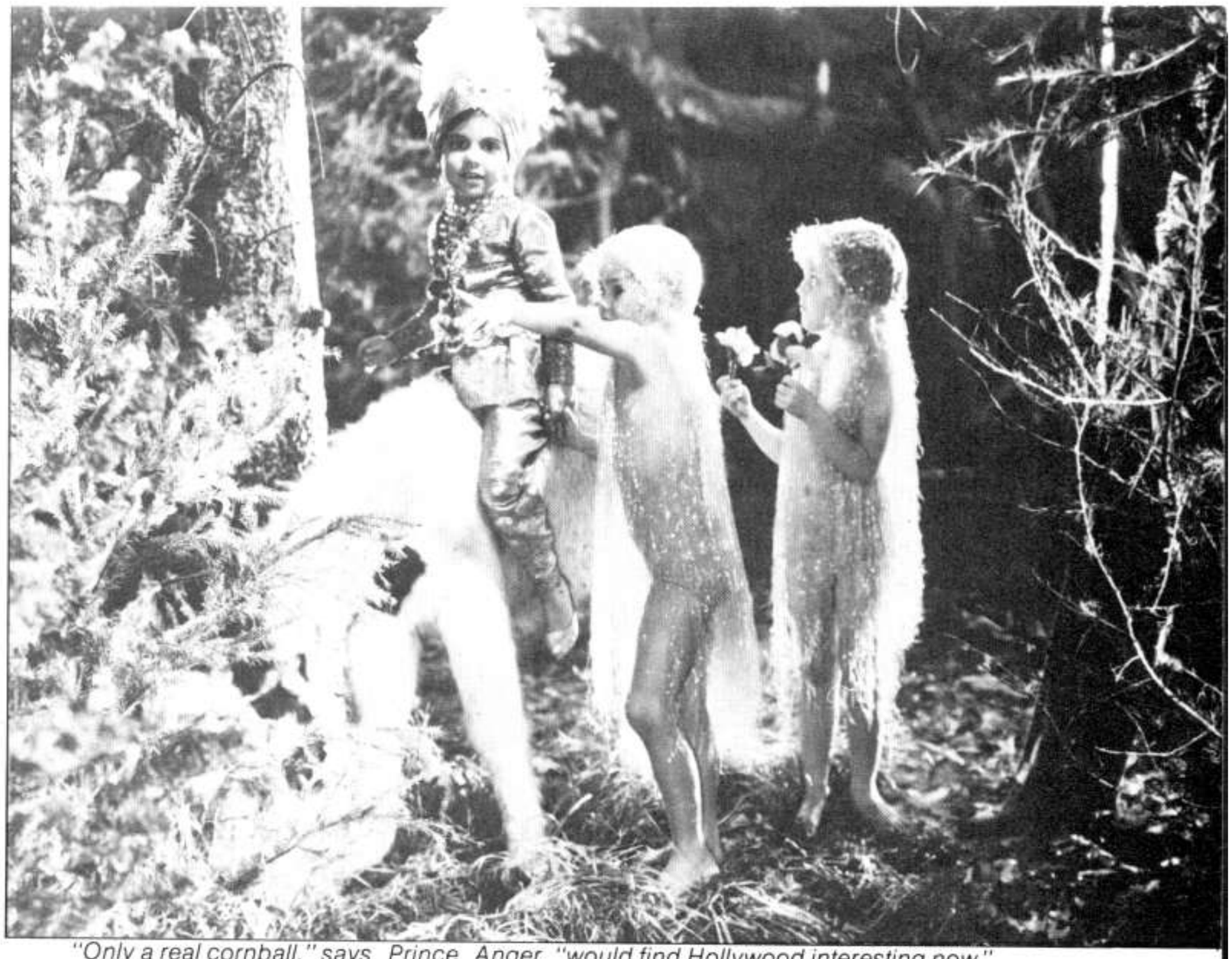
The second story concerns Parsons' death in an explosion at his Pasadena home. At our first meeting Anger brushed off the explosion as an accident, probably caused by careless handling of nitroglycerin which Parsons kept in the laboratory in his house. Three days later Anger confided his suspicions: rather than dying in "an accident," Crowley's magical son may, in fact, have been murdered—by *Howard Hughes!*

"Hughes was after him," Anger claims. "He wanted Jack to work for him but Jack refused. At one point Hughes even had him kidnapped; he had two of his men strong-arm Jack into a limousine and drive around for an hour trying to persuade him to work for Hughes. Hughes didn't take very kindly to people refusing his invitations. Shortly afterwards, Jack's house was blown up. It was never clear what caused it but Jack was in the middle of packing to go to Mexico after a threat had been made against him."

Hughes' own death some years later was a gruesome parody, says Anger, of the jet-set dictum that you can't be too rich or too thin. "His money did him no good at all in the end and he weighed only 90 pounds when he died. He had a phobia about germs but at the same time he wouldn't let anybody near him to look after him. Frank Sinatra has a germ phobia too. He's always washing his hands. Obvious Freudian connotations there . . . washing away the guilt. . . ."

After Parsons' death Anger lived for a while with the scientist/magician's wife, herself a witch, intensifying his study of Crowley's system of "Magick." Later he lived for a while in Crowley's old home at Boleskin on the shores of Loch Ness, owned now by Jimmy Page, another student of Crowley's teachings ("Page can afford to collect things like that," says Anger), and in 1955 made a pilgrimage to Crowley's "Abbey of Thelema"—a deserted farm house in Cefalu, Sicily—to restore ritualistic erotic wall-paintings which had been whitewashed over by Mussolini's police following Crowley's expulsion from the island. Local peasants, suspecting a revival of Crowleyism on the island, greeted Anger with a traditional curse—a mutilated cat on his doorstep. Anger left in his own time, three months later.

His pilgrimages to Crowley's old haunts typify Anger's peripatetic nature. He appears to have no permanent base. He keeps an apartment on New York's West Side but rarely stays there. For the last couple of years his filmmaking has centered him in London, where he lives in a decidedly spartan hotel room—kept as fastidiously tidy as Anger keeps himself—rather than taking an apartment. One senses that he has few ties; any number of acquaintances drawn from the diverse circles in which he moves—rock musicians like Zeppelin and the Stones, artists, writers, fellow students of Crowley—but few friends. He says he tends to be a private person and indeed gives little of himself away in conversation.



"Only a real cornball," says Prince Anger, "would find Hollywood interesting now"

Twice a year he cuts himself off altogether from the outside world and retreats to an isolated part of the countryside to practice Crowley's system of Magickal Retirement—solitary meditation to revitalize powers and contemplate future action. "I do it once in spring, once in autumn," he says. "I have places that I go back to each time." He doesn't say where they are.

It is a little hard to reconcile the idea of Anger the urbane, conservatively-dressed movie buff with an idiosyncratic taste for scandal, with the idea of Anger the magician—student of Aleister Crowley, a man who styled himself "The Beast." In a nightclub where a party of us have adjourned after a showing of Anger's films, the conversation circulates around dreams (Anger says he dreams in color), vegetarian food (he seldom eats meat), travel—unremarkable subjects; Anger seems restless and uncomfortable in the surroundings, over-dressed in his suit and formal shirt, perspiring slightly. But when he slips off his jacket and rolls up his shirt-sleeves it is to reveal two intricately-carved occult tatoos—the Seal of Crowley on his left arm, the Seal of Lucifer on his right. It is unexpected—strangely shocking.

Anger allows that what people expect of him and what they actually get may be two completely different things. "I do meet people who expect me to appear in a puff of smoke," he says. "I think people get something out of the name Anger—all the connotations it has. I guess they expect me to come in and kick over the furniture."

His filmmaking activities perhaps provide insights into his character which are not apparent in everyday surroundings. In *Fireworks*, for example, Anger himself takes the part of a young man who fantasizes being beaten by a posse of sailors on shore leave (a disturbingly violent and bloody beating at that) before being cradled in the arms of another sailor. The film seems to compound a quote once attributed to Anger: "As a child I felt a terrible need for love. My family offered nothing, so I found it vicariously in violence." *Invocations of My Demon Brother*, made some 22 years after *Fireworks*, reveals another side of Anger with footage of him enacting a Magickal ritual, furiously pacing a circle, clad in flowing purple robes, his face a taut, entranced mask of concentration.

Anger describes his films as magical games and invocations, and he employs a variety of visual settings in which to weave his spells. In *Eaux d'Artifice* his camera plays hide-and-seek with a dwarf woman masked and dressed in period costume as she floats through the cascading backdrop of the fountains of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli. The symbolic meaning of the piece (if indeed there is a symbolic meaning at all) is as good as irrelevant; the *effect* is literally enchanting. In *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* the imagery is hallucinatory, multi-layered, the use of occult symbols more overt and intense; again

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the "plot" of the piece (mythic in itself) is incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

Scorpio Rising, perhaps Anger's best known film, which he describes as "a 'high' view of the myth of the American motorcyclist," is more conceptual, dwelling on biker's rituals, intercutting leather and chrome—the totems of bike cult—with footage of Brando in *The Wild One* and Christ as seen in a third-rank Hollywood Biblical epic. *Scorpio* also gives evidence of the sardonic humor which informs much of Anger's work—particularly the scene where a biker, emulating Brando's macho-posturing, tries to strike a match on his teeth and burns his lip.

Anger's films are essentially personal visions, to the point where his casts (who are seldom professional actors and work on a voluntary basis) are often completely aware of how their particular role fits into the general cosmology of the film. He never works with a script; his films contain no dialogue but are set to musical pieces chosen to complement the visual imagery —Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in *Eaux d'Artifice*; teen-beat hymns like "He's A Rebel" and "My Boyfriend's Back" in *Scorpio Rising*.

Marianne Faithfull, who appears in Anger's current project, *Lucifer Rising*, describes working with him as an act of blind faith. "He made every one of us who worked on the film, more or less without knowing anything about it and without having read a script, want to do it, and do it completely seriously." On set Anger works spontaneously, creating "atmospheres" for his cast to respond to. Marianne says he never tells his cast what he expects them to do until five minutes before he expects them to do it.

She tells of one incident during filming at a cemetery in Egypt when Anger suddenly produced a skull from under his jacket, doused it in blood, placed it on a tombstone and ordered her to crawl on her belly towards it while he rolled the camera. She is still unsure what part the scene plays in the film. "Actually," she says, "I won't understand *Lucifer* until I've seen it at least three times—on opium, if necessary."

Marianne recalls another occasion, also in Egypt, when Anger wanted film of a "magical" stone. Anger held the stone in view of the camera and "as he was holding it he was completely freaking out, completely carried away. The expression on his face was quite unbelievable."

Anger draws a discreet but firm veil over discussing his magical experiences at any great length. "There are certain areas of myself I like to protect to some degree," he says. Perhaps even now he fears something of a repetition of the antagonism and misunderstanding which shadowed Crowley throughout his lifetime. "Actually, I did think at one time that I might get the Jesus freaks after me," he says wryly, "but they haven't found me yet. . . .

"I've had enough experiences to convince me that there's another area of reality," he says. "It's there all the time; you either have to pursue it, or it just reaches out and taps you on the shoulder. In some cases I haven't asked for it, it just happened. In other cases I've deliberately challenged it, through the use of ritual, calling something into presence . . . just a spirit. There's lots of them—good, bad and indifferent. . . ."

He smiles when you ask him which *he* has invoked. "Well, it's hard to put value judgments on another dimension; like so-called 'evil' might be purely a human feeling. The fire-spirit, for example, could set your house alight, but there's nothing wrong with fire *per se*, it just may be in the wrong place. So you've got to decide whether you really want any dealings with

MAJE WALDO

"I INVITED HIM OUT TO BREAKFAST. I ASKED HIM WHAT HIS NAME WAS AND HE TOLD ME-- JOE LUCIFER"

something like that, before you start fooling around. There are all sorts of impersonators and fraudulent entities that you have to see through and banish; you could liken them to a blind or a barrier—a barrage of dragon secretaries in an office that you have to get through to see the boss.

"Often demons assume human form too, and they *seem* to be human; they're what Crowley called 'elementals.' Like some people are extremely susceptible to being mediums—and they can be very untutored in this respect, like the servant-girl in Victorian times who would *poltergeist* disturbances without having any idea what was going on. Just by her being around things would start flying around the house. In the same sort of way, an elemental is a person who is a demon in disguise and is being used by this force which is manifesting itself through them. The human 'envelope' usually isn't aware of this on an intellectual level and it's very disturbing for them to have it pointed out to them.

"I've had hostile reactions when I've come out and said, 'You're behaving in a certain way because somebody else is jerking the strings.' You can spot elementals if you're attuned to it; you can almost draw up a list of six or seven traits which they conform to. They're usually very unstable people, almost uncontrollable. The ones I've come across usually disappear very quickly, which is the classical thing; if I've known them for two weeks, that's a long time.

"I once read an invocation in Golden Gate Park, a classic ritual to the eternal, bornless spirit—Lucifer—never born because he always *has been*. One of the keys to Lucifer is this certain color blue. And just after I'd finished reading, there was a flash of that exact turquoise color from across the park. It was at dawn. I went over to see what it was and found this figure kneeling beside the lake. I realized then that the flash I'd seen was the sunlight reflecting off this locket that was hanging around his neck.

"He was an escaped madman; he'd jumped the fence of a mental hospital someplace and he was on the run. When I found him he was so hungry he was about to catch a duck in the lake with his bare hands to eat it raw—which is pretty strange in itself.

"I invited him out to breakfast. I asked him what his name was and he told me—Joe Lucifer. I looked after him for about a week before he ran off but in that time he told me what it was like being a spirit . . . always on the run. I'm sorry I couldn't have filmed him, he was just too quick. I could talk to him but if I turned the camera on him he'd have run off even quicker than he did. He had a very strong aura about him and he was extraordinary looking—with slanting emerald-green eyes and red hair. He was only about twenty-one. He had this strange drawing on the back of his jacket; it was a male torso with two heads growing from the neck—a man and a woman's, looking at each other. He said it was a self-portrait. He ran off barefoot. Just left his boots to prove he was there in the first place. . . ."

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It was around the time of the invocation in Golden Gate Park that Anger began to develop the themes for his most ambitious and important film to date—*Lucifer Rising*: a work which puts Lucifer in what Anger feels is his proper pantheistic perspec-

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tive as the "bringer of light." According to traditional Christian belief, Lucifer is the fallen angel.

"Lucifer was the original rebel, the original bad boy," says Anger with a laugh. "In fact he's supposed to be the agent behind most of the rebels and bad boys in biblical stories, like the Prodigal Son." The prodigal son, of course, returns.

Marianne Faithfull needs opium

"Well, that's the equivalent of Lucifer rising. Of course, in orthodox Christian terms this is utter blasphemy; he was supposed to be cast out forever. . . ."

The ascent has been painfully slow, punctured by the most extraordinary hold-ups, disruptions and tragedies. Anger's main problem has been finding someone to portray Lucifer. His first choice was a five-year-old boy, named Godot, a child of stunning self-assurance. He recollects seeing the young Godot save the skin of his parents by turning away two policemen who had come to bust a pot party at his house. "He answered the door on his own initiative, stared the policemen in the boots and simply said, '*Fuck off*, cops.' They just backed off and split. It was the most astonishing thing I've ever seen in my life." Godot/Lucifer died shortly afterwards after falling through a skylight.

Lucifer Two was 19-year-old Bobby Beausoleil, a one-time guitarist with the group Love. Anger managed to shoot 30 minutes of footage with Beausoleil before things started to go wrong. "It was largely a betrayal of trust," says Anger. "I trusted him, but he turned out to be untrustworthy. He was behaving like demons in people do." Beausoleil was fired. Two years later he was under the spell of Manson's creepy-crawlies, facing life imprisonment for murder.

"I was terribly surprised when that happened," Anger says, "even though he was obviously a kid with certain character faults. To get involved with that sort of senseless, stupid slaughter. . . ." Anger still corresponds with Beausoleil in prison. Beausoleil still signs his letters "Lucifer."

After he was fired, Beausoleil/Lucifer stole most of the footage which had been shot for the film. Anger used what little remained for his Magickal short, *Invocation Of My Demon Brother*, with a searingly hypnotic Moog synthesizer soundtrack composed and performed by Mick Jagger. Anger asked Jagger to be Lucifer Three. Jagger agreed, but backed off before filming actually began.

"Mick doesn't know anything about ritual magic, and he didn't then," Anger explains. "He just picks up on vibes—he's pretty good at that. At the time I asked him—1969—he could still have *just* been able to play the part, but not now; he's into too much of a performance now in every sense of the word. Like at the time he wrote 'Sympathy For The Devil,' which is a song I guess I must have influenced in some way, he really *meant* it, but he's lost that charisma. After Altamont he got scared of becoming too closely identified

MAJE WALDO

Occult tattoos and Magickal ritual

with that whole *Their Satanic Majesties* thing; it was all becoming too literally true in a way that was destroying the group. Two or three Altamonts and that would have been the end of it. I think at first he thought the film would be a bit of a joke, then it all got too close for comfort. I notice that when he married Bianca, he was wearing a prominent cross. Of course, lots of whores wear crosses. . . ."

Anger moved on. For a while Jagger's younger brother, Chris, occupied the role, but Anger and Jagger/Lucifer fell out while filming in Egypt. Finally, Anger stumbled upon his fifth and—for the moment, at least—present Lucifer, a steelworker from Middlesborough named Leslie Huggins.

Begun in 1967, *Lucifer* has risen only to the extent of some 25 minutes of completed film and a half-finished soundtrack by Jimmy Page, recorded at Page's newly-constructed "space-capsule" studio at his Sussex home. Page has used the synthesizer to duplicate the sounds of five other instruments; the effect is one of distorted recognition—it *sounds* like a guitar, and yet. . . . In the same way as Jagger's soundtrack for *Invocation* is purely a "heartbeat" for the visual descriptions of the film, so Page's soundtrack for *Lucifer* is designed not to stand as a self-contained entity but to enhance the rhythms of the movie, gaining in intensity as the film gathers momentum with fragmented images piling one on top of the other—Osiris and Isis shaping the creation of the earth, Lilith (Marianne Faithfull), Lucifer's betrothed, climbing a spiralling stone staircase to the sun; Anger pacing a circle; Lucifer himself raising his arms to the heavens to conjure a storm; a flying saucer gliding silently over the Sphinx. . . .

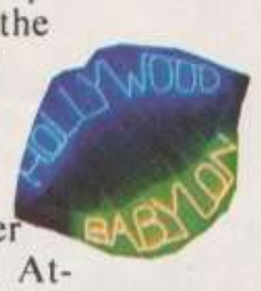
Anger has another four hours of film in the can and for now the only thing to prevent *Lucifer* from rising even higher is money. At a recent showing of the incomplete film in London, Anger was to be seen onstage prior to the viewing brandishing a copy of *Hollywood Babylon* and jokingly exhorting the audience to buy the book "to help clear my debts."

"A magician isn't all-powerful," he explains. "For much of his life Crowley was in miserable financial straits but he didn't have the power to whisk up money to bolster his bank account. It's ironic that at the time he lived there wasn't much of a 'market' for what he was doing. Nowadays he could be doing the lecture circuit, or have his fancy retreat in the country where people go to have their heads changed."

Anger doesn't relish the thought of the lecture circuit and his chosen medium for

Leslie Huggins succeeded Jagger

changing heads is not a lucrative one. But scandal—as *Confidential* always knew and Kenneth Anger is finding out—sells. And if becoming the Samuel Pepys of Hollywood tittle-tattle is what Anger must do to subsidize his filmmaking activities, then so be it. He now plans a sequel to *Hollywood Babylon*. That chapter on Joan Crawford is just waiting for the good lady to kick the bucket and he's got lots of dirt on Howard Hughes' harem and Lionel Atwell's weekend orgies. Kenneth Anger was about ten when Lionel Atwell first started hosting orgies. . . .



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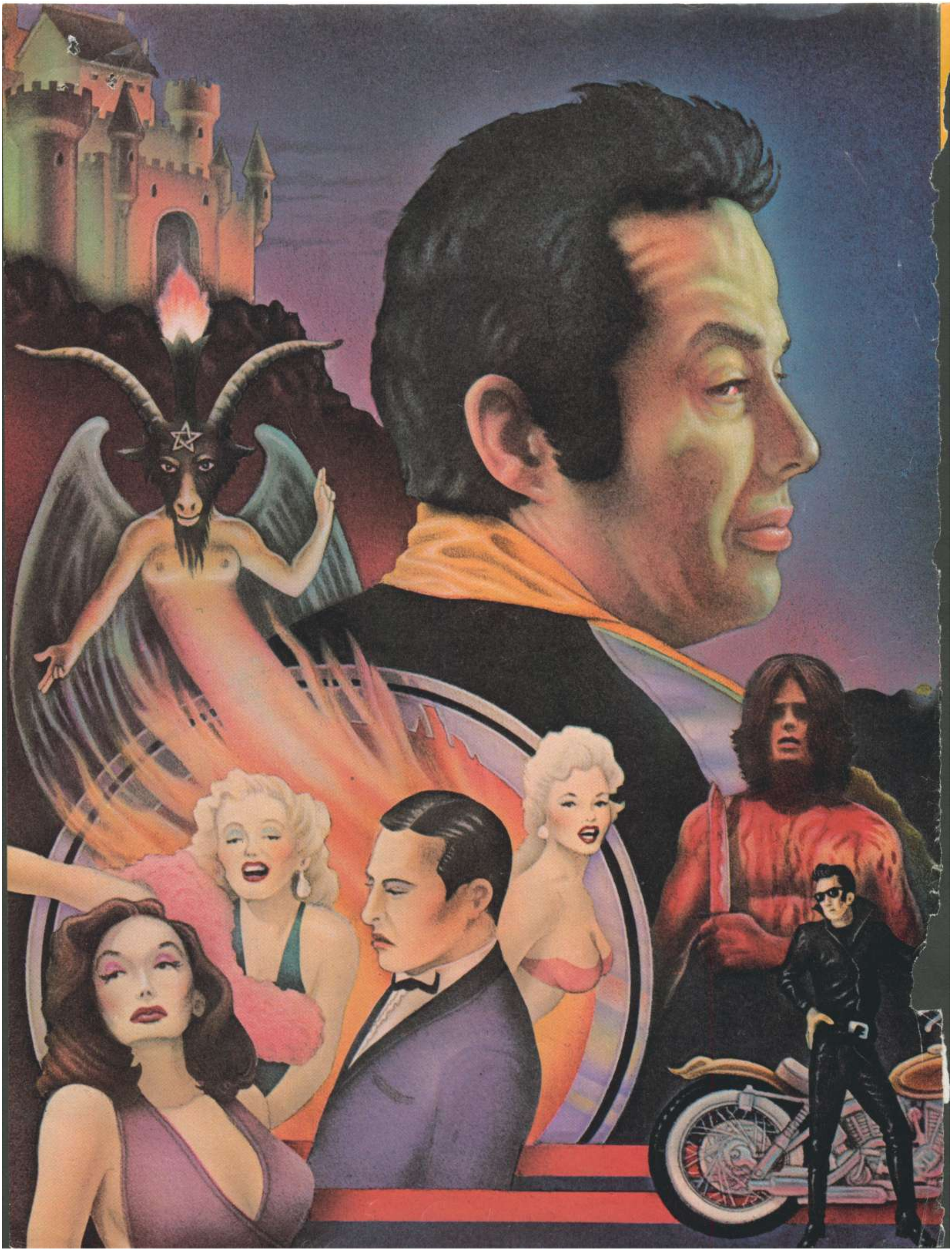

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